DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 944 CS 005 756

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TITLE RIF + USSR = R.E.A.D.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 6p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Junior High Schools; *Motivation Techniques; Program Descriptions; *Program Development; *Reading Materials; *Reading Programs; *Student Motivation; *Sustained Silent Reading; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Reading Is Fundamental

ABSTRACT

A junior high school reading program entitled Reading for Enjoyment and Development (READ) that combines the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) inexpensive book distribution program and the practice of entire school participation in uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR) is described in this paper. The development of the project and practical aspects such as scheduling, picking up the books at a wholesaler's, and promoting staff support are described. Summaries of staff and student surveys indicating high satisfaction with the program are provided. (MKM)

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RIF + USSR = R.E.A.D.

By Diane A. Ball

RIF + USSR = R.E.A.D.

During the past two years the students and staff at Oakwood Junior High School, Dayton, Ohio have been enjoying the product of the above equation which also succinctly explains our highly successful combination of programs.

. A RIF grant is used to implement an uninterrupted sustained silent reading program. Last year approximately 2500 paperback books were purchased and given to the students, one book per student per distribution. There were four distributions, in April, May, November and February.

. Reading is FUNdamental (RIF), a non-profit corporation, is the contract agent for the federal grant program "Inexpensive Book Distribution Program for Reading Motivation". Currently this law authorizes funds to promote reading motivation and continuation of the program through 1983.

. USSR is a very simple concept: everyone in the school building, i.e., the students, principal, faculty, and support personnel, participates during regularly scheduled times in silent reading. No other activity takes place during these periods. It is an uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading time.

The acronym R.E.A.D. ("Reading for Enjoyment And Development", coined by the Principal) is the program title used for Oakwood's effort to establish reading as a lifetime activity.

Oakwood's program had its inception when a neighboring school's USSR program was mentioned in the faculty lounge during a lunch hour. Spontaneous comments abounded, "I've wanted to try something like that here", "It sounds like a fantastic idea", "I'd really like to try it", "Why don't we propose it?". No negative comments were forthcoming from this lively

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group. The discussion was immediately reported to the Principal who agreed to consider the project. A literature search was undertaken to gather background information on other sustained silent reading programs. The interest which had been sparked continued to grow through informal staff discussions. Goals were identified, possible negative factors and barriers were delineated and given thorough consideration. A program outline was prepared for consideration by the Principal's Advisory Committee. Simultaneously, a RIF grant proposal was submitted. Less than six weeks later notification of approval for funding was received. At this time the program proposal was formally presented to the entire faculty. The need for their cooperation and full support in order for the program to succeed was discussed. Admittedly the enthusiasm of a majority of the staff and the resulting peer pressure helped persuade the 'reluctant dragons' to become involved. Agreement was achieved and 100% support was pledged.

Following this staff meeting rapid implementation of the program began to take place. Received from RIF, along with the news that the grant had been approved, were instructions, book suppliers profiles (RIF books must be purchased from approved suppliers), required order forms, and distribution reports. The suppliers profiles include: discount schedules, geographic limitations, scope and types of books handled, names of contact persons, ordering instructions and other information pertinent to the individual suppliers. The first task was to examine and evaluate the 251 profiles in order to sort out which suppliers would fit our local needs. The supplier was chosen for the initial purchase and the ordering process began.

A program coordinator was appointed as soon as the staff commitment was received. At the same time, a committee composed of staff and parents was appointed to assist in the book selection process. The members of this

Committee worked independently as well as meeting together to develop a balanced selection. Students were asked to submit titles, authors, and types of books they wanted. Staff recommendations were similarly solicited. From these sources the first orders were prepared in the traditional manner. Time lags, backorders, and temporarily out of stock titles caused some frustration and led to the decision to try an alternate selection procedure. The program coordinator and the principal traveled a distance of one hundred miles to the supplier's warehouse. On-site selections were made using the titles and authors generated by the committee, students, and staff as well as their personal knowledge of appropriate titles from those available on the supplier's shelves. Approximately 1200 books were pulled from the racks, invoiced, boxed and taken along on the return trip. This successful on-site selection process significantly cut the timing of the order phase of the procedure and allowed the initial distribution process to be conducted during English classes the following week. This buying procedure was repeated in the fall by the program coordinator and an experienced volunteer in order to complete the purchases allowed by the current grant. This has become the major method used to choose books for the program.

The next step was distribution of the books to the students. A non-transferable R.E.A.D. coupon was given to each student to be exchanged for a free book. English classes were scheduled to come to the LMC for the selection process. Each class was allotted twenty minutes to peruse the books which were arranged faceup on tables in the IMC. An attempt was made to equalize the selection over the two day period by having books in pre-sorted boxes ready to add to the selection table between classes.

There is no exaggeration in the statement that 99% of the students were very eager to use their coupon. Even the very few who didn't think

they wanted a book did take one and predictably several of them became quite interested in the project. (An important facet of the program is the fact that the books become the property of the student and may be kept permanently or exchanged for another R.E.A.D. book). A one-for-one book exchange was begun immediately after the first distribution. The R.E.A.D. book cabinet, a rolling paperback rack, shaped like a book, became a focal point for activity during each school day.

With their books chosen the school community was ready for the R.E.A.D. schedule to begin. R.E.A.D. periods are arranged so that they rotate equally throughout the school day and week. Each of the seven periods of the school day is divided into two mods, therefore no class period is used for R.E.A.D. more than three times each nine week grading period. R.E.A.D. periods are suspended during the last few weeks of school and not re-initiated until several weeks after school begins in the fall. At one point, in the second year of operation, when it appeared that interest may have been waning the program was suspended for a month. There have been many student requests to restart the program during all the periods when the activity was suspended.

A very good feeling surrounds this program. Support exists among both the students and staff. A survey was conducted revealing the statistics shown on page 5.

The renewal of and funding increase in the grant has allowed the R.E.A.D. program to continue as well as expand to additional distributions and circulations. We look forward to it's continuation.

R.E.A.D. = SUCCESS

STAFF SURVEY N = 29

38% thought the program excellent and wanted to see it expanded.

55% thought the program good and wanted to see it continued in the same manner.

7% thought the program should be continued but with less time devoted to it.

STUDENT SURVEY N = 414

46% indicated they would like the program expanded.

46% wanted it to continue in the same manner.

5% wanted it to continue but with reduced emphasis.

3% wanted to discontinue the program.

82% thought the book exchange provided them with more opportunities to read.

71% reported they read more books during the R.E.A.D. program than formerly.

59% reported an increase in their reading for pleasure.

74% reported an increase in enjoyment of reading, an increase in comprehension, reading speed or a combination of these factors.